America’s Epidemic

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, my fellow Americans. I have been troubled lately. It seems our country is so engulfed in international issues we have begun to lose sight of our own domestic problems we face on a day-to-day basis.

Take a moment and think about your family and friends; envision them in front of you as I speak. Are any overweight? Are any obese? Are any morbidly obese? The odds are you answered yes to each of these questions because in the U.S.A. 58 million people are overweight. 40 million people are obese. And 5 million of our fellow Americans are morbidly obese. It is certainly not a sin to be overweight, however it is unhealthy.

Obesity is on the verge of surpassing smoking as the number one cause of preventable death according to the American Obesity Association. The deaths have reached 300,000 a year. How is this possible? Obesity increases the chances of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and many other health conditions in both men and women. The Center for Disease Control claims that America has one of the highest percentages of obesity in the world. 33% of adults are obese.

Whose fault is it that people have become so unhealthy? Fast food restaurants lure us in with juicy cheeseburgers, tempt us with salty fries, and entice us with cold refreshing beverages. Despite the lack of sophistication their meals offer, they provide us with a desire. How many times of you thought to yourself, “I could really use a cheeseburger right now”? Fast food has become the answer to many of our questions such as “I only have a couple bucks where can I get some food”? With the economy in a desperate situation, more and more people have sped to fast food restaurants for meals as if they were being herded there.

According to the Macdonald’s website, the Big Mac contains 540 calories and 29 grams of fat, medium French fries contain 380 calories and 19 grams of fat, a medium Coke has 210 calories. In total, this equals 1130 calories and 48 grams of fat. There are over 13,000 MacDonald’s restaurants in America according to Nutritionmaster.com. This is about 4 times as many as the second highest country, Japan. With these numbers, it is no wonder why obesity is so prevalent in the U.S.

I urge you, next time you are faced with the option of going to a fast food restaurant, make a healthier choice. Make dinner at home or go to a different restaurant. Even if you are not a risk for obesity, avoid these restaurants. It will help someone else. If enough people boycott fast food, they will go out of business or at least shut down some branches which will force others to make healthier decisions.

Some may say that it is the individuals fault, that they should exercise more, watch what they eat, or spend less time on the couch. While all this is true, they cannot be held entirely responsible.

“I eat because I’m unhappy, and I’m unhappy because I eat.” Fat Bastard may not be a serious character however his words have a powerful voice. Some people are caught in a never-ending cycle. They eat to cure their depression only to become more depressed by the weight they gain. People in this situation may need guidance and that is why we as a nation must rise together to help the lives of each other.

Dr. Derek J. Brown claims that in thirty U.S. states, thirty percent of **children** are obese. Much of this problem starts at home. Children watch fours of T.V. a day and are constantly fed fast food. They do not know the risks of eating unhealthy and living a sedentary lifestyle. For many children physical education and recess time in elementary schools has been cut to create more time in the classroom. Therefore, the fight against childhood obesity starts with educating adults. By educating adults, they too will become more aware of the situation and will try to make themselves healthier as well.

Obesity is a concern for teens as well. This age group is extremely self-conscious because of the airbrushed models they are expected to emulate. When one realizes that they don’t look like these models they could become depressed and follow the same never-ending cycle of eating to ease agony.

According to Time Magazine, by 2020, non-smoking adults could live 3.76 years longer than they currently do. However, this achievement will be erased is the obesity rates continue to climb steadily. You may think that those four years make no difference. They do. 4 years can be the difference between seeing your son graduate from college, and watching your daughter get married, and telling your grandparents you love them, and holding your own grandchild, and witnessing the Cubs win the world series or the UCONN women lose a game.

Obesity is an issue that should take precedence over foreign issues. It is a problem that begins with children, carries through with teens, and stays with adults. It is not up to an individual to rid themselves of this problem, it is a nationwide concern, it is an epidemic. It is nothing this country cannot handle.